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epic

ILLUSTRATED

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NINE TO FIVE
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THROUGHOUT THE THREE THOUSAND YEAR HISTORY OF JAPAN, THERE HAVE BEEN LEGENDS AND MYTHS ABOUT A STRANGE, DEMONIC CREATURE CALLED THE **ONI**.

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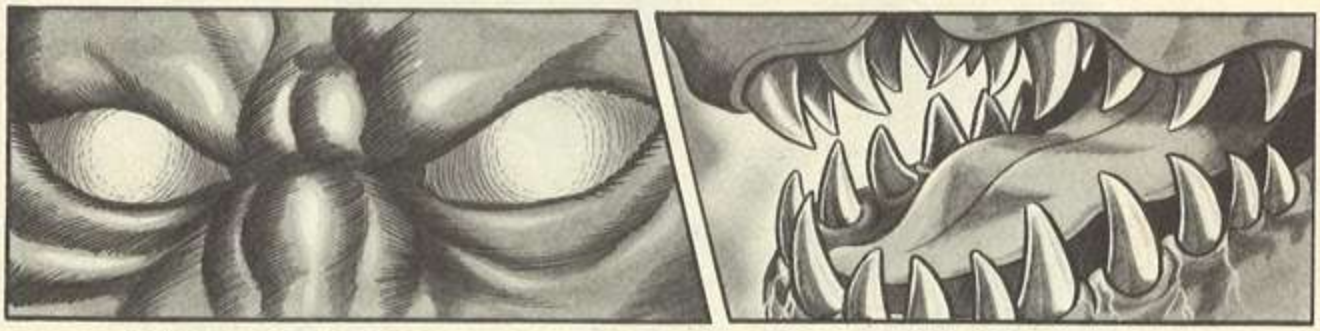
IT WAS SAID TO STAND ABOUT TEN TO TWENTY FEET TALL, AND HAVE GREAT HORNS GROWING ON ITS HEAD. WHERE A HUMAN WOULD HAVE HAD TEETH AND NAILS, ONI HAD FANGS, AND TALONS...

PEOPLE OF THE HEIAN PERIOD, AROUND 700 A.D., LEFT BEHIND THEM MANY TALES AND MYTHS OF SEEING ONI, AND SO THE DEMON BECAME PART OF THEIR HISTORY.

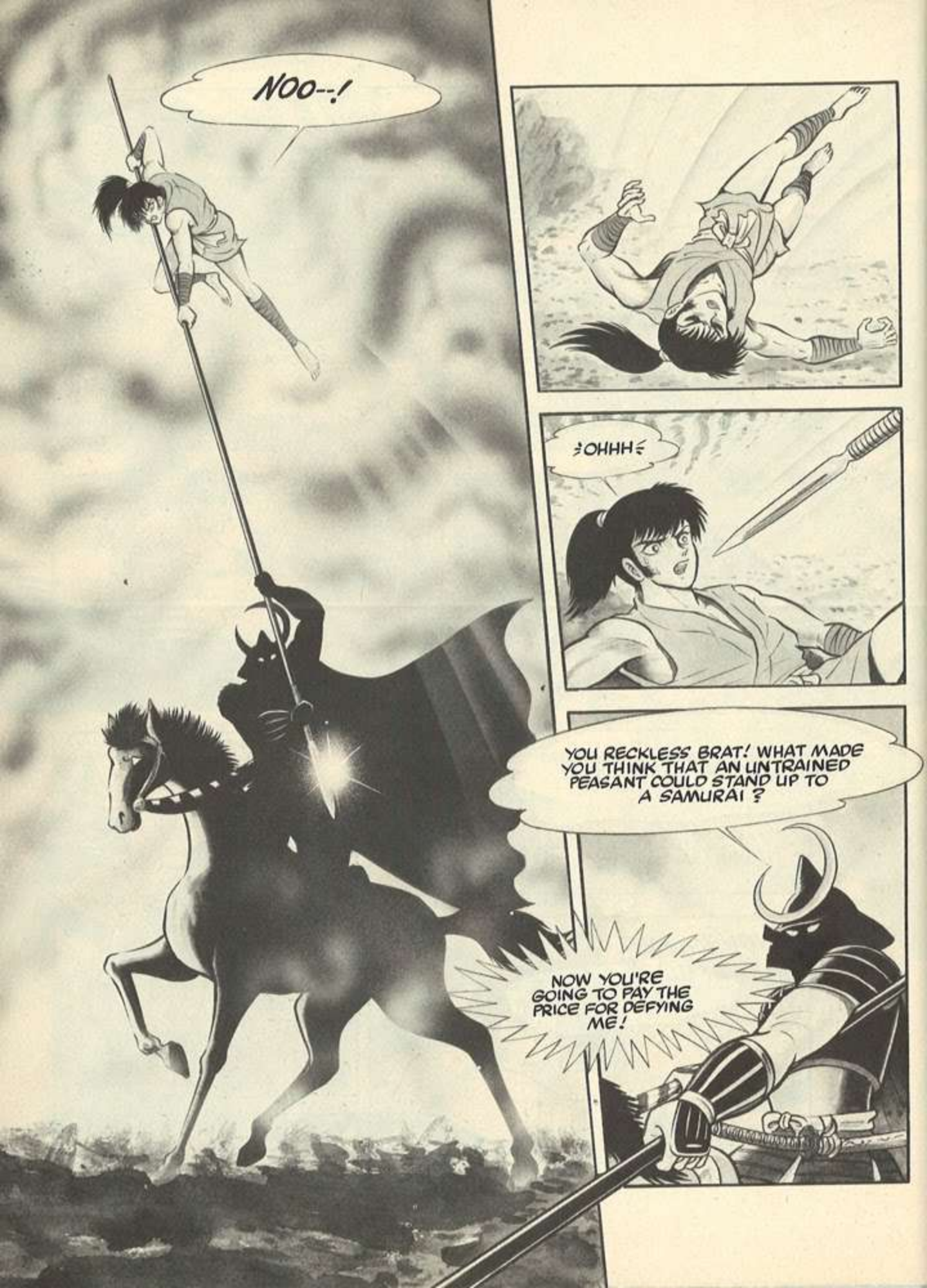


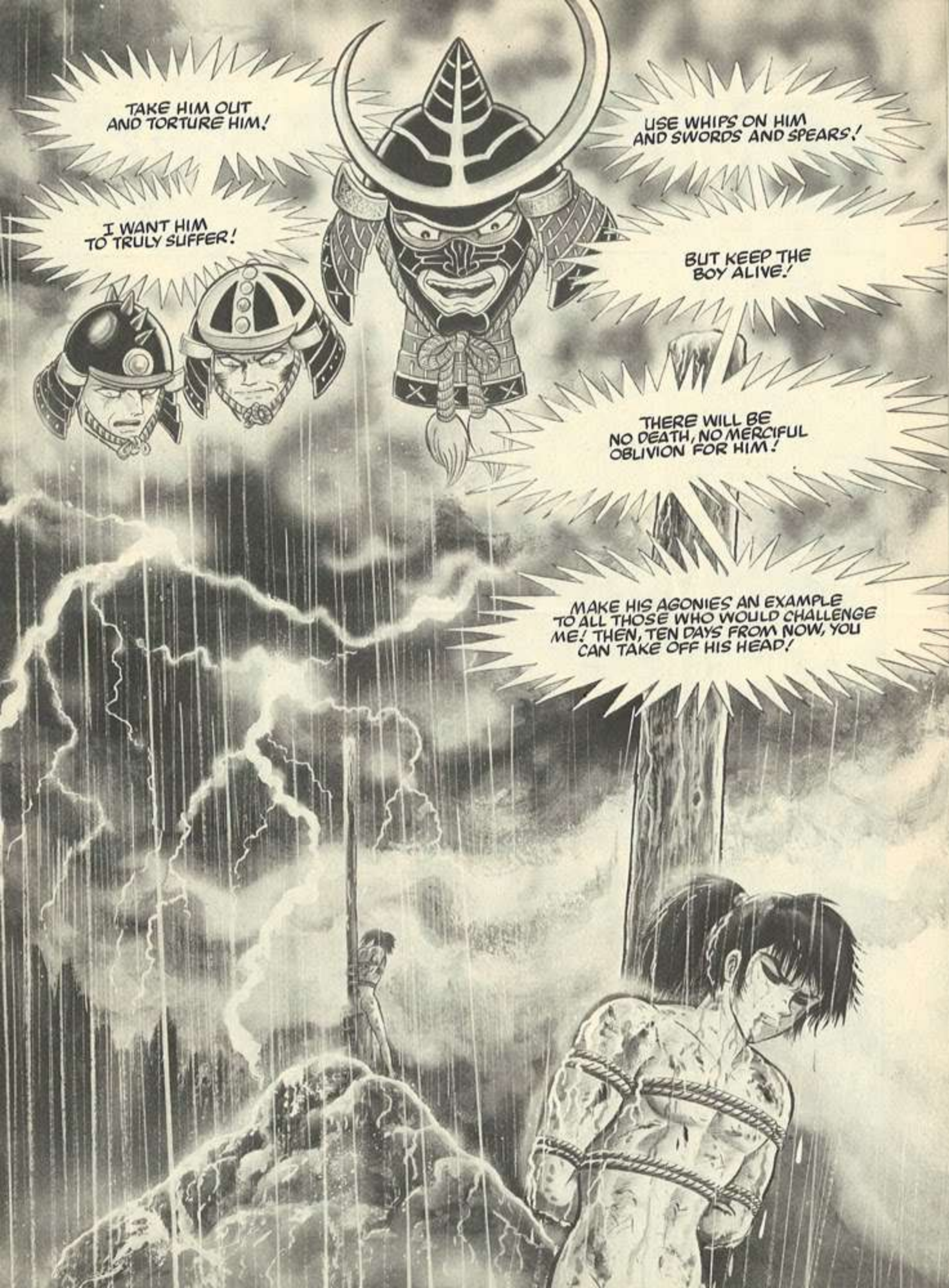
EVEN IN JAPAN TODAY, STORIES ABOUT THE ONI PERSIST. BUT WHAT WERE THESE STRANGE CREATURES, AND WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? DID ANYTHING MORE THAN FANTASY AND IMAGINATION UNDERLIE THE MYTHS...?

KREEEEEE

CORPSES ALL AROUND US!
AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE...
NOTHING BUT THE BODIES OF THOSE WE'VE SLAIN. THAT PLEASES ME...
THESE HEAPS OF CARRION ARE PROOF OF MY GREAT POWER. NONE COULD STAND BEFORE ME!
"I'LL BUILD A MOUNTAIN OF THE DEAD ALL THROUGH JAPAN, AND SET MY IMMORTAL EMPIRE ATOP THEIR BONES!

EH--?
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, KAGETORA DEMON!
WE MUST HAVE OVERLOOKED YOU AMONG ALL THE DEAD.
WHO ARE YOU?
YOU KILLED MY FAMILY!!
WHY, YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A PEASANT.


NOO--!
OHHH
YOU RECKLESS BRAT! WHAT MADE YOU THINK THAT AN UNTRAINED PEASANT COULD STAND UP TO A SAMURAI ?
NOW YOU'RE GOING TO PAY THE PRICE FOR DEFYING ME!


TAKE HIM OUT AND TORTURE HIM!
USE WHIPS ON HIM AND SWORDS AND SPEARS!
I WANT HIM TO TRULY SUFFER!
BUT KEEP THE BOY ALIVE!
THERE WILL BE NO DEATH, NO MERCIFUL OBLIVION FOR HIM!
MAKE HIS AGONIES AN EXAMPLE TO ALL THOSE WHO WOULD CHALLENGE ME! THEN, TEN DAYS FROM NOW, YOU CAN TAKE OFF HIS HEAD!

I'M NOT GOING TO DIE!
I CANNOT LET THEM KILL ME, NOT LIKE THIS...
I SWEAR I SHALL SURVIVE...
I OWE IT TO MY PARENTS... MY SISTER...
TO THE MEMORY OF ALL THE OTHER VICTIMS...
I WILL NEVER DIE!!

SHZRAAK

THUS, WAS ONE ONI CREATED, BORN OF A YOUNG MAN'S PAIN AND ANGER, AND HIS DESIRE FOR VENGEANCE AGAINST THE WARLORD KAGETORA DEMON, WHOM NO MORTAL ALONE COULD DEFY...